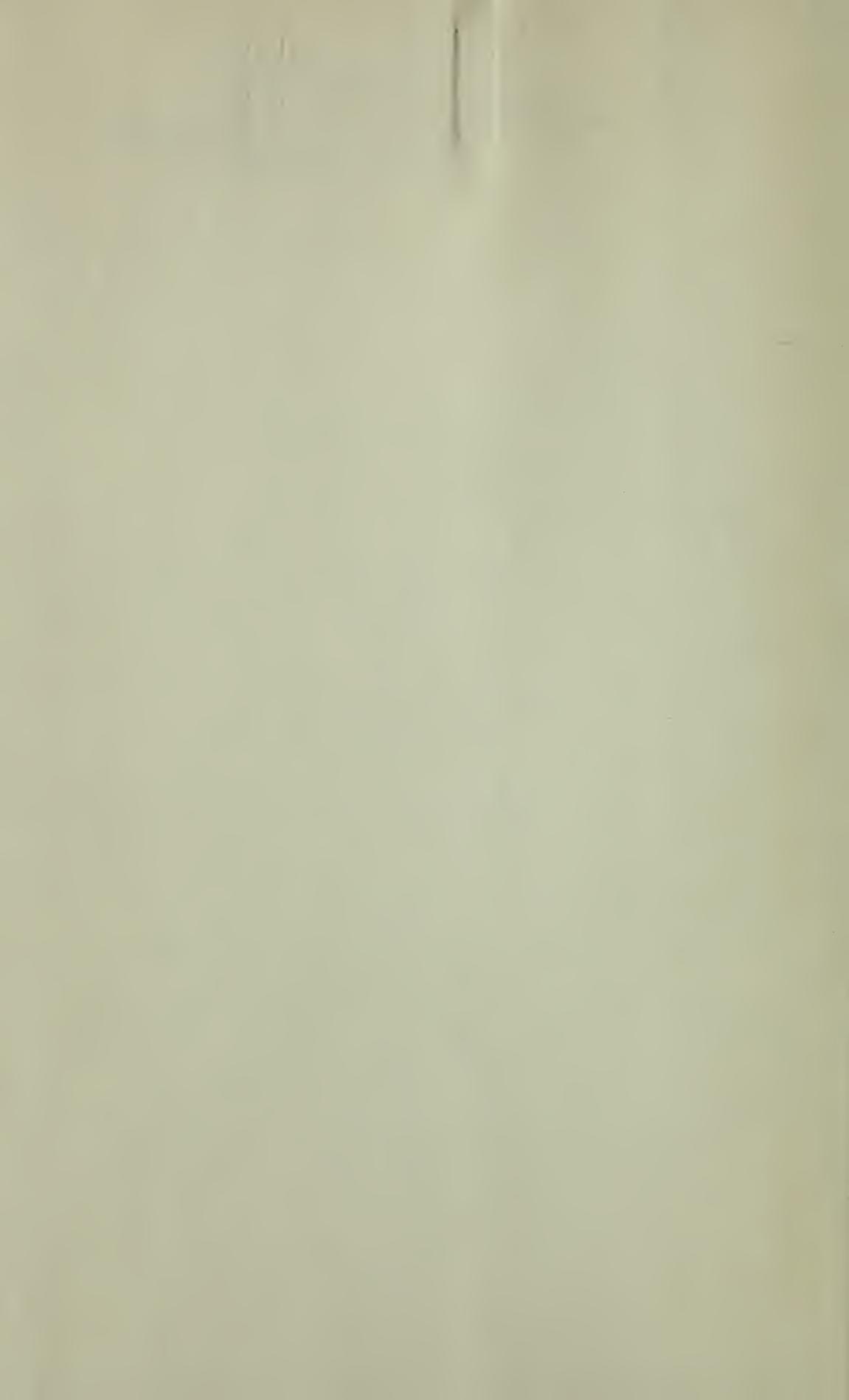


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Observations on the Correspondence Between Poetry and Music

Daniel Webb



Garland Publishing, Inc., New York

1970

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O B S E R V A T I O N S
ON THE
C O R R E S P O N D E N C E
B E T W E E N
P O E T R Y and M U S I C.

O B S E R V A T I O N S
ON THE
C O R R E S P O N D E N C E
B E T W E E N
P O E T R Y and M U S I C.

By the AUTHOR of
AN ENQUIRY into the BEAUTIES of
PAINTING.

Concordant carmina nervis.

Ovid. Metam.

Carminis suavitas, numerique, non solum ad aurium
delectationem compositi, sed ad res ipsas exprimen-
das, omnemque animi motum concitandum efficaces.

Lowth de Sacr. Poet. Hebraeorum.

L O N D O N,
Printed for J. DODSLEY, in Pall-mall.
M DCC LXIX.

[v]

To his GRACE

The D U K E

O F

G R A F T O N,

First Lord of the Treasury, &c. &c.

My LORD,

THE beauty of order in the
disposition of visible objects,
the powerful effects of arrangement
in the succession of our ideas, of
measure and proportion in the suc-

A 3 cessions

cessions of sounds, are but different modifications of one common principle. The *lucidus ordo* of Horace marks how much he thought the second connected with the first ; the design of the following essay is to prove, how intimately the third is connected with both : to point out the origin, and to lay open the advantages of a musical elocution. We who have no other merit than to feel these advantages are under a natural subjection to those who exert them : the Critic, my Lord Duke, is but a dependent on the Orator. It is under the sanction of this dependence, that I presume to engage your Grace's attention ; and to claim a part of
that

[vii]

that time which you so happily employ to the noblest purposes.

I have the honour to be

Your GRACE's

Most humble, and

Obedient servant,

DANIEL WEBB.

O B S E R-

O B S E R V A T I O N S
O N T H E
C O R R E S P O N D E N C E
B E T W E E N
P O E T R Y and M U S I C.

THOUGH the influence of music over our passions is very generally felt and acknowledged ; though its laws are universally the same, its effects in many instances constant and uniform; yet we find ourselves embarrassed in our attempts

2 OBSERVATIONS ON

tempts to reason on this subject, by the difficulty which attends the forming a clear idea of any natural relation between sound and sentiment.

SOME have thought to elude this difficulty, by supposing, that the influence of sound on passion may arise from the habit of associating certain ideas with certain sounds. It cannot be necessary to enter into a formal examination of such a principle as this, since it must fall of course on the discovery of a better.

I HAVE observed a child to cry violently on hearing the sound of a trumper, who, some minutes after, hath fallen asleep to the soft notes of a lute. Here we have evident marks of the spirits being

POETRY AND MUSIC. 3

ing thrown into opposite movements, independently of any possible association of ideas. This striking opposition in the effects of musical impressions seems to indicate the regular operation of a general and powerful principle.

ALL musical sounds are divided into acute and grave : the acute spring from strong, the grave from weaker vibrations. No sound, therefore, can act as a single impression, since we cannot have a feeling of it but in consequence of a succession of impressions : should it appear, that our passions act in like manner by successive impressions, or, that they affect us on a principle similar to that which is deduced from the analysis of sounds, we might then hope to become

4 OBSERVATIONS ON

masters of the desired secret, and to discover, so far as such things are discoverable, the nature of the relation between sound and sentiment.

As we have no direct nor immediate knowledge of the mechanical operations of the passions, we endeavour to form some conception of them from the manner in which we find ourselves affected by them: thus we say, that love softens, melts, insinuates; anger quickens, stimulates, inflames; pride expands, exalts; sorrow dejects, relaxes: of all which ideas we are to observe, that they are different modifications of motion, so applied, as best to correspond with our feelings of each particular passion. From whence, as well as from their known

POETRY AND MUSIC. 5

known and visible effects, there is just reason to presume, that the passions, according to their several natures, do produce certain proper and distinctive motions in the most refined and subtle parts of the human body^a. What these parts are, where placed, or how fitted to receive and propagate these motions, are points which I shall not inquire into. It is sufficient for my purpose to have it admitted, that some such parts must exist in the human machine: however, as in our pursuits after knowledge, it is discouraging to be reminded every moment

^a *OMNIS enim motus animi suum quendam à natura habet vultum, et sonum, et gestum: et ejus omnis vultus, omnesque voces, ut nervi in fidibus, ita sonant, ut a motu animi quoque sunt pulsæ.*

Cicero de Oratore.

6 OBSERVATIONS ON

of our ignorance, I shall take advantage of the received opinion touching this matter, and assign the functions in question to the nerves and spirits. We are then to take it for granted, that the mind, under particular affections, excites certain vibrations in the nerves, and impresses certain movements on the animal spirits.

I SHALL suppose, that it is in the nature of music to excite similar vibrations, to communicate similar movements to the nerves and spirits. For, if music owes its being to motion, and, if passion cannot well be conceived to exist without it, we have a right to conclude, that the agreement of music with passion can have

no

POETRY AND MUSIC. 7

no other origin than a coincidence of movements ^b.

WHEN, therefore, musical sounds produce in us the same sensations which accompany the impressions of any one par-

^b Si quis igitur ita harmoniam accommodare posset, ut spiritus eodem prorsus motu, quo harmonici numeri, moveretur, is intentum effectum produceret haud dubie, idem enim præstaret quod in duobus polychordis exactissime concordatis fit; quorum alterutrum modulis harmonicis incitatum in altero etiam intacto eandem omnino harmoniam producit. Kirch. Musur. I. vii.

WHETHER we account for the imitations of music in this manner, or call them, after Aristotle, the ὁμοιωματα των ηθων και παθων—simulacra morum et affectionum—we have alike in view a principle of assimilation; with this difference, that, by establishing a mode of operation, whether real or imaginary, we are enabled to convey our ideas with greater clearness touching the several modes of imitation.

8 OBSERVATIONS ON

ticular passion, then the music is said to be in unison with that passion ; and the mind must, from a similitude in their effects, have a lively feeling of an affinity in their operations.

IN my Remarks on the Beauties of Poetry, I have observed,

THAT, in music, we are *transported* by sudden transitions, by an impetuous reiteration of impressions.

THAT we are *delighted* by a placid succession of lengthened tones, which dwell on the sense, and insinuate themselves into our inmost feelings.

THAT

THAT a growth or climax in sounds *exalts* and *dilates* the spirits, and is therefore a constant source of the *sublime*.

IF an ascent of notes be in accord with the sublime, then their descent must be in unison with those passions which *depress* the spirits.

ALL musical impressions, which have any correspondence with the passions, may, I think, be reduced under one or other of these four classes.

IF they agitate the nerves with violence, the spirits are hurried into the movements of anger, courage, indignation, and the like.

THE

10 OBSERVATIONS ON

THE more gentle and placid vibrations shall be in unison with love, friendship, and benevolence.

IF the spirits are exalted or dilated, they rise into accord with pride, glory, and emulation.

IF the nerves are relaxed, the spirits subside into the languid movements of sorrow.

FROM these observations it is evident, that music cannot, of itself, specify any particular passion, since the movements of every class must be in accord with all the passions of that class.—For instance, the tender and melting tones, which may be expressive of the passion of love, will

POETRY AND MUSIC. 11

will be equally in unison with the collateral feelings of benevolence, friendship, and pity; and so on through the other classes.

ON hearing an overture by Iomelli, or a concerto by Geminiani, we are, in turn, transported, exalted, delighted; the impetuous, the sublime, the tender, take possession of the sense at the will of the composer. In these moments, it must be confessed, we have no determinate idea of any agreement or imitation; and the reason of this is, that we have no fixed idea of the passion to which this agreement is to be referred. But, let eloquence co-operate with music, and specify the motive of each particular impression, while we feel an agreement in

12 OBSERVATIONS ON

the sound and motion with the sentiment, song takes possession of the soul, and general impressions become specific indications of the manners and the passions.

It is imagined by some, that verse hath no other object than to please the ear. If by this they understand, that verse cannot excite or imitate passion, they would do well to reflect on the nature of pleasure: at least, through this medium, were there no other, verse must have an influence over all those passions which are founded in pleasure. But verse is motion, and verse produceth pleasure, which is likewise motion ^c.

^c Τροχειδας δ' ομηριν ειναι την ηδονην, καινηστιν τινα της φυξης. Arist. Rhet. c. xi.

How

How then? hath nature struck out a correspondence between external and mental motion in one instance, to the exclusion of all others: provident, industrious, in establishing laws for an inferior purpose, would she stop short at the first opening of advantage, and contract her system at the very point where it called for enlargement? I do not wish to set out upon better ground than in direct opposition to such ideas as these.

It has been supposed, that the correspondence of music with passion springs from a coincidence of movements; and

inde, voluptas—huic verbo omnes duas res subjiciunt, lætitiam in animo, commotionem suavem jucunditatis in corpore. Cicero de Finibus, l. ii.

that

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that these movements are reducible to four classes, distinguished by their accords with the passions of pride, sorrow, anger, and love. Should these principles hold good in verse, which is the music of language, we shall have little reason to doubt of their extending to music in general.

THE passion of love is soft and insinuating ; it dwells with a fond delight upon its object :

—*Illum absens absentem auditque, videtque.*

O fairest of creation, last and best
Of all God's works. Creature in whom
excell'd

Whatever can to sight or thought be form'd
Holy, divine, good, amiable, or sweet. *

^d *Paradise Lost.*

And

And again :

Awake,

My fairest, my espous'd, my latest found,
Heav'n's last best gift, my ever-new delight,
Awake. *

THE expansion of pride is constant in its influence, and compels the measures into a corresponding movement. In the following lines, we have at once a description of the passion, and a proof of its effect :

*Op'ner mine eyes,
Dim erst, dilated spirits, ampler heart
And growing up to godhead.* ^e

*Ast ego, quæ divum incedo regina, Jovisque
Et soror, et conjux.* ^f

^e *Paradise Lost.*

^f *Aeneid.* l. L.

But

16 OBSERVATIONS ON

But I, who move supreme, heav'n's queen,
of Jove
The sister, the espous'd.

IT seems to me, that the pleasure which we receive from great and sublime images arises from their being productive of sensations similar to those which are excited by pride. Whether the sensation springs from a consciousness of superiority in ourselves, or from the contemplation of greatness in external objects, we feel the same enlargement of heart; our emotions are congenial, and their accords consonant:

Thus far these beyond
Compare of mortal prowess, yet observ'd
Their dread commander : he above the rest

In

POETRY AND MUSIC. 17

In shape and gesture proudly eminent,
Stood like a tow'r.^s

THE movement the most opposed to pride must be in accord with sorrow. A descent of notes, if I mistake not, prevails through the following passage :

Me miserable ! which way shall I fly
Infinite wrath, and infinite despair ?
Which way I fly is hell ; myself am hell ;
And in the lowest deep a lower deep
Still threat'ning to devour me opens wide.
O then at last relent ; is there no place
Left for repentance ; none for pardon left ?^t

IN general, a protracted sound, joined to a kind of languor or weakness in the movement, will be happily expressive of sorrow :

^s Paradise Lost.

18 OBSERVATIONS ON

Longas in fletum ducere voces.

Earth felt the wound, and nature from her
seat
Sighing, through all her works gave signs
of woe
That all was lost.^b

ON comparing this passage with the following, we shall observe the difference between an imitation by movement, and an imitation by sound:

Tellus et pronuba Juno
Dant signum, fulsere ignes et conscius Æther
Connubii, summoque *ulularunt* vertice
nymphæ.¹

IN this second instance, the agreement depends on the force of a particular word

^a Paradise Lost.

2

ⁱ Æneid. I. IV.

or

POETRY AND MUSIC. 19

or sound, as being imitative of a particular idea. In the former, the accord springs from an agreement of syllables or sounds no otherwise imitative than as they determine by their succession the nature of the movement. A distinction which must be carefully observed in the application of that general maxim,

The sound must seem an echo to the sense. *

It cannot be expected, that the principles of imitation should operate in all similar cases with an equal happiness. There is a stubbornness in the nature of language, which often renders it unapt to fall into that order and succession to which the affection leads us. But the indulgence which the poet may claim from

* Pope's Essay on Criticism.

20 OBSERVATIONS ON

this consideration must not be extended so far as to encourage him to a total violation of the laws of harmony. When our passions are strongly engaged, we are impatient of opposition; and, in every such case, a counter-movement in measure hath much the same effect with a discord in music. Under the impression of these ideas, I cannot reconcile to my feelings that passage with which the Roman poet closes his mournful tale of the death of Priam :

Jacet ingens litore truncus,
Avulsumque humeris caput, ac sine nomine
corpus.¹

THERE is a vigor in this movement that is at variance with the idea: it coun-

¹ *Aeneid.* I. II.

ter-acts

POETRY AND MUSIC. 21

ter-acts our feelings, renders the nerves elastic, and sets the spirits on the spring.

In the next example, a movement of *dejection* follows, and thereby marks more strongly the character of anger :

Ite,

Ferte citi flamas, date vela, impellite remos.

—*Infelix Dido!* ^m

Fly,

Catch the quick flames, spring forward, crowd
the sails—

Lost, lost Eliza!

WHEN anger hath for its object a studied and distant revenge, its impetuosity gives place to a deliberate vehemence :

^m *Æneid.* l. IV.

C 3

No,

22 OBSERVATIONS ON

No, let us rather chuse,
Arm'd with hell-flames and fury, all at once
O'er heav'n's high tow'rs to force resistless
way,
Turning our tortures into horrid arms
Against the torturer; when to meet the noise
Of his Almighty engine he shall hear
Infernal thunder; and for lightning, see
Black fire and horror shot with equal rage
Among his angels.^a

In the preceding arrangement of the passions and their accords, anger, pride, sorrow, and love, have been made to preside over, and govern, as it were, the simple movements of music; but as our passions in general are derived from these, or partake, in some degree, of their nature, it should seem that we may, by the

^a *Paradise Lost.*

various

POETRY AND MUSIC. 23

various combinations of these primary movements, attain to the expression of *almost* every passion. Thus, pity will find its accord in an union of the movements of sorrow and love; for there cannot be pity without benevolence; and benevolence directed to a particular object is a mode of love:

How art thou lost, how on a sudden lost,
Defac'd, deflower'd, and now to death de-
vote? •

Joy is a lively motion of the spirits in ascent, as partaking of the nature of pride. For pleasure, according to the Stoics, is a *sublatio animi*,^P a lifting-up of the mind. The affinity between pleasure

• *Paradise Lost.*

P *παραστίς.*

24 OBSERVATIONS ON

and pride is thus happily marked by the poet:

That now,
As with new wine intoxicated both,
They swim in mirth, and fancy that they
feel
Divinity within them breeding wings
Wherewith to scorn the earth. ¶

BUT the expansion of joy differs from that of pride, as being apt to break forth in prompt and lively fancies, flying in giddy rapture from one object to another:

All Heav'n
And happy constellations on that hour
Shed their selectest influence; the earth
Gave sign of gratulation, and each hill—
Joyous the birds, fresh gales and gentle airs

¶ *Paradise Lost.*

Whisper'd

POETRY AND MUSIC. 25

Whisper'd it to the woods, and from their
wings
Flung rose, flung odours.

TERROR is a perturbation of the spirits, connected with the sublime by the enlargement of its images, and the vehemence of its impressions:

What if the breath that kindled those grim
fires
Awak'd should blow them into sev'nfold rage
And plunge us in the flames? or from above
Should intermitted vengeance arm again
His red right hand to plague us? what if all
Her stores were open'd, and this firmament
Of hell should spout her cataracts of fire
Impendent horrors?

In the following passage, the agitations of terror subside into movements of

¹ Paradise Lost.

dejec-

26 OBSERVATIONS ON

dejection: for fear hath its foundation in sorrow, and, as such, must have a tendency to conform with its principle:

While we perhaps,
Caught in a fiery tempest, shall be hurl'd
Each on his rock transfix'd, the sport and
prey
Of wracking whirlwinds, or for ever sunk
Under yon boiling ocean, wrapt in chains;
“ There to converse with everlasting groans,
“ Unrespited, unpitied, unrepriev'd,
“ Ages of hopeless end.”*

INDIGNATION is a mixed affection, uniting the vehemence of anger with the expansion of pride:

Heu furiis incensa feror, nunc augur Apollo,
Nunc Lyciæ sortes, nunc et Jove missus ab
ipso

* *Paradise Lost.*

Inter-

POETRY AND MUSIC. 27

Interpres divum fert horrida jussa per auras.¹

Fury distracts my brain; now Phœbus warns,
Now dreams, now oracles, now winged gods
Bring the curs'd mandate.

FROM these we pass to movements of
pure and unmixed pride:

Scilicet is superis labor est, ea cura quietos
Sollicitat! neque te teneo, neque dicta re-
fello.²

Think we such toils, such cares, disturb the
peace

Of heav'n's blest habitants! alike I scorn
Thy person and imposture.

How sudden is the return to anger?

Fly, be gone,
Rush through the billows, brave the storm —

¹ Aeneid. l. IV.

28 OBSERVATIONS ON

IF there are passions which come not within the reach of musical expression, they must be such as are totally painful. Painting and sculpture, on whatever subjects employed, act simply, as imitative arts ; they have no other means of affecting us than by their imitations. But music acts in the double character of an art of impression as well as of imitation : and if its impressions are necessarily, and, in all cases pleasing, I do not see how they can, by any modification, be brought to unite with ideas of absolute pain. I am confirmed in this opinion by observing, that shame, which is a sorrowful reflection on our own unworthiness, and therefore intirely painful, hath no unisons in music. But pity, which is a sor-

row

row flowing from sympathy, and tempered with love, hath a tincture of pleasure. Hence the poet :

Dimn sadness did not spare,
That time, celestial visages ; yet, mix'd
With pity, violated not their bliss. *

PITY, therefore, hath its unisons in music ; so hath emulation, which is noble and animating, to the exclusion of envy, which is base and tormenting. The same distinction must extend to anger and hatred ; for anger hath a mixture of pleasure, in that it stimulates to revenge ;* but hatred, having no such hope, works inward and preys upon itself.

* Paradise Lost.

* Πασον οργη επειδαι τινα ηδονην την απο της ελπιδο-
τε τημωρησασθαι. Arist. Rhet. I. II. c. ii.

50 OBSERVATIONS ON

THE number of the passions thus excluded from becoming the subjects of musical expression will not be very considerable, since, on a strict inquiry into those passions which are generally esteemed painful, we shall find that this very often depends on their motives and degrees. Thus terror, though in reality it be founded in pain, is yet in several of its modes attended with pleasure, as is evident in every instance where the means employed to excite it, either by the idea or the movement, have any connexion with the sublime. But terror, like many other passions, though it be not absolutely painful in its nature, may become so from its excess; for horror, as I conceive, is nothing more than fear worked up to an extremity.

I could

I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word
Would *harrow up thy soul.* *

IT is on this same principle, that certain passions are found to add beauty or deformity to the countenance, according to the different degrees of force with which they act. A truth so well understood by capital painters, that they throw the extremes of passion into strong and charged features, while they reserve the finer expressions for the heightenings of beauty. Shakespear has touched on this last circumstance with his usual happiness:

O what a deal of scorn looks beautiful
In the contempt and anger of his lip. †

* Hamlet.

† Twelfth Night.

MR.

32 OBSERVATIONS ON

MR. LOCKE, considering the passions as modes of pleasure or pain, divides them into such as are absolutely pleasing, or absolutely painful, to the entire exclusion of all mixed affections. This division is too vague and general; it may save us the trouble of a minute investigation, but it will never lead us into a knowledge of the human heart. Thus, desire, according to this philosopher, is founded in uneasiness; but Aristotle will have its foundation to be in pleasure: whereas, in truth, it is a compound of both: of uneasiness through the want of an absent good; of pleasure from the hope of obtaining that good. I am tempted to convey my idea of this subject by an illustration borrowed from painting. Let us suppose

suppose the painful passions to be *shades*, the pleasing *lights*; we shall then find that many of our passions are composed of mid-tints, running more or less into light or shade, pleasure or pain, according to the nature, motive, or degree of the passion. For instance, if grief arises from the sufferings of others, it becomes pity, and is pleasing by its nature. If grief, proceeding from our own sufferings, be hopeless, and therefore excessive, it becomes misery or despair, and is painful from its degree.

LET grief be tempered with hope, it hath a tincture of pleasure:

All these and more came flocking, but with looks

Down-cast and damp, yet such wherein appear'd

D

Obscure,

34 OBSERVATIONS ON

Obscure, some glimpse of joy, t'have
found their chief
Not in despair. *

THE remembrance of that which was dear to us, though it causes grief, yet it gives to our sorrow a cast of pleasure, as it produces in the soul the movements of love. It is in this situation, particularly, that we are said to *indulge* our grief :

Ask the faithful youth,
Why the cold urn of her whom long he lov'd
So often fills his arms. *

IF grief should spring from a consciousness of guilt, it is shame, and is painful from its motive; if attended with in-

* Paradise Lost.

* Akenside, Pl. of Im.

nocence,

nocence, it may come within that beautiful description,

She sat like patience on a monument,
Smiling at grief. ^b

In order to treat of the passions with precision, we should determine their several modes, and fix an unalienable sign on each particular feeling. To this end we should have a perfect intelligence of our own natures, and a consummate knowledge of every thing by which we can be affected: in short, we should have conceptions in all points adequate to their objects. Such knowledge would be intuitive. We should, in this case, want no comparisons of our ideas and senti-

^b Twelfth Night.

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ments ; no illustration of one thing by its resemblance to another : thus every proposition would be reduced to a simple affirmation, the operations of the understanding would cease, and the beauties of the imagination could have no existence. Providence has judged better for us, and by limiting our powers has multiplied our enjoyments.

THE wisdom so conspicuous in the abridgement of our perceptions, appears with equal evidence in the bounds prescribed to those arts which were destined for our delight and improvement. It has been observed, that music can have no connexion with those passions which are painful by their nature ; neither can it unite with our other passions when they

they become painful by their excess; so that the movements of music being in a continued opposition to all those impressions which tend either to disorder or disgrace our nature, may we not reasonably presume, that they were destined to act in aid of the moral sense, to regulate the measures and proportions of our affections; and, by counter-acting the passions in their extremes, to render them the instruments of virtue, and the embellishments of character.

I NEED not profess, that, in forming my ideas of the passions, I have trusted much more to poets than to philosophers: among the latter, there have been some who would by no means have admitted the distinction just now established be-

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tween emulation and envy. Hobbes hath, after his manner, given us the portraits of these passions, but with such sister-like features, that it is no easy matter to distinguish the one from the other. He has, with equal industry, and for the same purpose, excluded from pity and the sympathetic affections every idea of benevolence or of natural beauty ; conceiving them, contrary to all true feelings, to be nothing more than the different workings of one and the same narrow and selfish principle. It may be considered as a happiness in our subject, that it exempts us from a dependence on the systems of philosophers, or the refinements by which they are supported. The process in which we are engaged obliges us to trace the passions by their internal move-

movements, or their external signs; in the first, we have the musician for our guide; in the second, the painter; and the poet in both: it is the province of music to catch the movements of passion as they spring from the soul; painting waits until they rise into action, or determine in character; but poetry, as she possesses the advantages of both, so she enters at will into the province of either, and her imitations embrace at once the movement and the effect. How delightful, in this point of view, to contemplate the imitative arts; those sister-graces, distinguished yet depending on a social influence; the inspirers of elegant manners and affections; the favourites of that Venus, or nature, whose beauties it is their office to cultivate, and on whose steps it is their joy to attend!

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AMONG the opinions which have prevailed touching the union of music with passion, the most general seems to be this—That as melody is a thing pleasing in itself, it must naturally unite with those passions which are productive of pleasing sensations; in like manner as graceful action accords with a generous sentiment, or as a beautiful countenance gives advantage to an amiable idea. The proposition taken singly is vague and superficial; but the illustrations by which it is supported penetrate deeper, and give us an insight into the relation between the cause and the effect: for in what manner can action become the representative of sentiment, unless it strikes us as springing from some analogous

movement in the soul? it is the same thing with regard to beauty, which can give no advantage to sentiment, without being thrown into motion; nor can this motion have any meaning or effect, unless it carries with it the idea of a corresponding agitation in the mind.

IT was from a feeling of an imitative virtue in music, or of its aptness to excite pathetic motions, that Shakespear attributes to it the power of producing a kind of reverberation in the soul:

Duke. How do'st thou like this tune?

Viola. It gives a very echo to the seat
Where love is throned.^c

^c *Twelfth Night.*

LET US apply this idea to the effects of the forté and piano in music. Loudness is an increased velocity in the vibration, or a greater vibration made in the same time.⁴ Music therefore becomes

* HENCE it is, that those, who, through indelicacy of ear, are insensible to finer impressions, are observed to be affected by loud music; because the increase of the impression forces the dull and sluggish organ into responsive vibration.

If to loudness be united a greater intensity or weight of sound, as when music acts in full chorus, the impression is still farther augmented; and the effects, though less exquisite, become more powerful.

BUT if the ear is so unhappily formed as that music can neither solicit nor compel the organ into union, then the consequence will be, either that the impression shall produce weak and imperfect movements, and like a constant monotonous murmur lull the bearer asleep, or it will excite strong and irregu-

imita-

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imitative, when it so proportions the enforcement or diminution of sound to the force or weakness of the passion, that the soul answers, as in an echo, to the just measure of the impression. It is from a propensity in our nature to fall in with these reciprocal or responsive vibrations, that, in expressing our own sentiments, or in reciting those of others, the voice mechanically borrows its tone from the affection ; thus it rises into vigor with the bold, and subsides into softness with the gentler feelings. We may try the experiment on the following lines :

Back from pursuit thy pow'r's with loud ac-
claim

lar vibrations, in which case it acts like a repeated noise, sets the nerves on the fret, and throws the spirits into a painful disorder.

Thee

Thee only extoll'd, Son of thy Father's
might,
To execute fierce vengeance on his foes :
Not so on man ; " Him thro' their malice
 " fall'n,
" Father of mercy and grace, thou did'st
 " not doom
" So strictly, but much more to pity in-
 " cline." *

THIS fall of notes, or weakness in the movement, is in the true spirit of musical imitation. The poet was so sensible of the happiness, that in the moment after he repeats the very same movement, and contrasts it by measures the most lofty and sonorous :

No sooner did thy dear and only Son

* *Paradise Lost.*

Perceive

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Perceive thee purpos'd not to doom frail man
So strictly, but much more to pity inclin'd—

Hail, Son of God, Saviour of men ! thy name
Shall be the copious matter of my song
Henceforth, and never shall my harp thy
praise

Forget, nor from thy Father's praise disjoin.^f

SOMEWHAT different from the transition in this last example is an even and continued swell from the piano into the forté: this, in music, is attended with a high degree of pleasure: on repeating the following passage, we discover the source of this pleasure, and find that it proceeds from the spirits being thrown into the same movement as when they rise from sorrow into pride, or from an humble into a sublime affection :

^f *Paradise Lost.*

If

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If thou beest he : but O how fall'n, how
chang'd

From him, who in the happy realms of light
Cloath'd with transcendent brightness didst
outshine

Myriads, though bright. *

A DESCENT of sound from the forte
into the piano hath a no less pleasing ef-
fect, corresponding with the condition
of the nerves, when from a state of ex-
ertion, which hath a mixture of pain,
we feel the sweet relief of a gradual re-
laxation :

He stood
With Atlantean shoulders, fit to bear
The weight of mightiest monarchies ; his
look

* Paradise Lost.

Drew

POETRY AND MUSIC. 47

Drew audience and attention still as night
Or summer's noon-tide air.^b

FROM the tenor of these examples it appears, that pleasure is not, as some have imagined, the result of any fixed or permanent condition of the nerves and spirits, but springs from a succession of impressions, and is greatly augmented by sudden or gradual transitions from one kind or strain of vibrations to another. It appears further, that the correspondence between music and passion is most striking in those movements and transitions which in each are productive of the greatest pleasure; consequently the source of pleasure must be in both the same, and the foundation of their

^b *Paradise Lost.*

union

union can be no other than a common principle of motion.

WHAT hath been just remarked, concerning the nature of pleasure, accounts for the observation, that a motion in any degree tending towards grace is more pleasing than the most graceful attitude. It is the nature of the imagination, on these occasions, to conceive something more than can be executed : hence it is, that a finished action almost ever disappoints and falls short of our expectation ; while, on the other hand, a motion which just rises above the measure of simplicity, if happily designed, commits as it were to our fancy the completion of the idea, and prompts us to the exertion of our finest feelings.

It was in consequence of having made this observation, that Raphael, that pupil of the Graces, threw his figures much oftner into motions that attitudes : and it is on the same principle, that the simple graces of the minuet, which are always in progression, give us a more sensible pleasure than the highest display of attitude in theatrical dances.

IF this observation holds good in the beautiful, it must still have greater force in the pathetic. While an actor is in motion, the mind of the spectator endeavours to keep pace with him ; when the action is brought to a point, or determines in an attitude, the progress of the mind is at an end, and this, at a time, when the imagination would naturally carry it

E on

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on through a succession of movements. It is contrary to the nature of passion to rest at any fixed point : there may be, perhaps, an exception from this rule in the case of extreme horror ; but it must be of horror unutterable—*Vox faucibus haesit.*—From the moment that a passion falls within the compass of expression, we cannot even conceive it, much less can we represent it, so as to separate from it the idea of increase or diminution. That action therefore which brings the mind to a full stop cannot be the representative of a mind in motion. The tortures of the Laocoön are most happily expressed by the efforts which he makes to support them, or by the degrees of action which the artist hath wisely kept in reserve.

I HAVE

I HAVE remarked on a former occasion, that in the sublime, “ such images “ as are in motion, and which, by a gradual enlargement, keep our senses in “ suspense, are more interesting than “ those which owe their power to a single impression, and are perfect at their “ first appearance.” Where there can be no gradation in an object, its influence on the mind is too suddenly determined. Is it not from the force of progressive sensations that the vivacity of our conceptions seems, at times, to exalt us above ourselves? hence the enthusiastic raptures, the boasted inspiration of poets, when the imagination, hurried through a train of glowing impressions, kindles in her course, and wonders at a

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splendor of her own creating. It is curious to observe what a chain runs thro' our feelings. When the sensual Anacreon draws the portrait of his mistress, he cloaths the libertine with a cautious modesty : thus, after having described the beauties of her face and neck, he stops short—

A scarlet vest

Shall hide beneath its folds the rest :
 Yet, let a little be reveal'd,
 A specimen of what's conceal'd.¹

Si qua latent, meliora putat: — But
 we have touched upon a subject in which

¹ Στολισθε το λοιπον αυτη
 Υπεροφυριστι πεπλοις,
 Διαφαινισθε σαρκω
 Ολιγος, το σεμι' ελεγχος.

the

the progress of the imagination may be too curiously pursued.

IF we have discovered any one common principle by which our feelings are connected, our next care must be to observe how far the arts can affect us in virtue of this principle, and what relation they bear one to the other in their several operations. How extensive might be the influence of these ideas, were they to be enlarged into system, and traced by men of genius through all their consequences ! Infinite are the advantages which may be derived from a diligent attention to the mechanical effects of passion ; from an accurate investigation of the correspondent movements of music,

E 3 and

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and from the consequent application of the powers of verse to the support and enforcement of the pathos.

As to the last of these advantages, I am persuaded that our general neglect of it has been owing, for the most part, to the mean opinion we are taught to entertain of our native language. We cannot, it must be confessed, pretend to equal the sweetness of sound or dignity of motion in the Greek measures; but I do not think the comparison so much against us with regard to our musical accords in general; and the reason is this: What we lose through the poverty of our measures, is in some degree restored by the simplicity in the construction of our language, in which every idea is so

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distinct, unmixed, and complete in itself, that it not only suggests, but often creates its own accord: whereas the arbitrary transpositions in the Greek and Latin make such breaks in the thoughts, and throw them so much out of that order in which they rise up in the mind, that the correspondence between the movement and the idea must become less frequent than would naturally be the case were the construction more simple. We shall generally find, that wherever there is a striking beauty in the ancient poetry, there is at the same time a remarkable simplicity in the succession of the ideas. In the communication of a thought, our aim is to produce in the minds of others an image of what passes in our own: in

E 4 propor-

56 OBSERVATIONS ON

proportion, therefore, as our feelings are thrown out of their natural order, the image is unfaithful, and the operations of our minds must lose a part of their influence.

If an irregularity in the order of the impressions obstructs the genuine effect of the idea, we may easily imagine in what manner it must disturb the music of the verse. To instance in one particular: If, when the epithet is divided from its substantive, the intervening idea should have no immediate relation to either, it is evident that no accord can be perfectly preserved through such a confusion of impressions.

As

As thus:

Infandum, | Regina, jubes renovare | dolorem.

But let the epithet be restored to its natural situation, and the ideas fall of themselves into an according movement, as in the very next line:

Trojanas ut opes, et lamentabile regnum—

“ It is the general quality of verse, says Quintilian, to reduce all ideas under the same laws.”^k Therefore, say

^k Versificandi genus est, unam legem omnibus sermonibus dare. l. IX. c. iv.

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our modern rhymers, verse hath no other object than to please the ear. It is unfair to draw from a general principle an inference which admits of no exception: and the principle in question, though true with respect to versification founded on an artificial prosody, and supported by the refinement of transposition, becomes less comprehensive when applied to verse; in which the quantities of syllables are determined by accent, and the accent by feeling; and where the ideas succeeding in their natural order must, if not impeded by counter-pursuits, communicate a part of their motion to the medium of their impressions. But, as I propose to resume this subject in another place, I shall confine myself,

myself, for the present, to matter of fact; and observe, that if our measures can ascend to the most exalted, and descend into the most depressed condition of the mind, they must necessarily include the accords of the intermediate affections. We may rest the proof of these powers on the following examples:

Mean while inhabit lax, ye pow'rs of
heav'n;

And thou my Word, begotten Son, by thee
This I perform: speak thou, and be it
done:

My over-shadowing spirit and might with
thee

I send along.¹

¹ *Paradise Lost.*

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SUCH is the effect of this last movement, that our spirits partake in the enlargement, the expansion, of the divine essence. How affecting is the contrast in these beautiful lines?

So much I feel my genial spirits droop,
My hopes all flat ; nature within me seems
In all her functions weary of herself. ^m

HAVING thus tried the foundation of our hypothesis by a variety of experiments, let us now proceed to examine how far these same principles may be found to agree with the history of Poetry and Music.

= Samson Agonistes.

I N

IN the first ages of the world, men's thoughts were altogether employed on their feelings ; prompted by nature to the communication of those feelings, their words followed the motion of their sensations, and became rather the imitative than the arbitrary signs of their ideas. Hence it is, that original languages, or, which is the same thing, the original parts of mixed languages, are always the most expressive. Plato, after having suggested that language owed its origin to the deepest reflection, and the most consummate wisdom, was notwithstanding forced to acknowledge, that words expressive

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pressive of their ideas abounded most in the barbarous, or, as he otherwise calls them, the most ancient languages; ⁿ an inconsistency into which he was betrayed in consequence of his having set out on the investigation of language at the wrong end; for though compounds, in many instances, carry in them the marks of mature reflection, and great ingenuity, yet the signs of simple ideas, which were the first in order, and with which of course he should have begun, are of a very different character: these, most undoubtedly, like the ideas which they represent, were the off-spring of sensation; they were the result of reiterated attempts, by men of lively feel-

ⁿ In Cratylus.

ings,

ings, to excite conceptions in others by the happiest indications of their own.

WORDS are modifications of sound and motion ; consequently they may become imitative of all those ideas which have any natural relation to either.

IMITATIONS of sounds operate by a direct similitude in the words—groan, sigh, whine, hiss, shriek, howl, and the like. The imitations of motion are of the same kind in the words—cling, climb, swing, wind, glide, drive. These, tho' monosyllables, and therefore usually considered as single impressions, yet, being composed of several distinct elementary sounds, possess, in effect, the advantage

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vantage of a succession of impressions : of this we shall be more sensible by comparing them with their opposites—flit, spring, skip, start, drop. In order to account for this remarkable difference, we should inquire into the mechanical formation of letters, or of the elementary sounds of which words are composed ; but as this would be a dry and tedious discussion, I shall refer those who may desire to trace this subject minutely, to the philosophers and grammarians who have enlarged upon it. °

SOME imitations act with the united powers of sound and motion, as—sob,

° Vide Platonem in Cratyllo. Dion. Hal. de Struct. Orat. Wallisi Gram. Ling. Ang.

gulp,

gulp, clap, thump, bounce, burst; in others, the organs of speech seem to undergo the very operation specified, as may be experienced in some of the examples already given, and still more forcibly, perhaps, in the words—grind, screw, lisp, yawn: nor is it at all an argument against the aim of imitation in these, that similar articulations are employed without any view to imitation in other instances; because the signs of all simple ideas which have no relation either to sound or motion must have been altogether arbitrary, and, as no attention to similitude could take place in their formation, might as well have been comprehended in one combination of sounds as another.

F

I HAVE

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I HAVE called the preceding imitations direct, to distinguish them from such as do not seem to have an immediate connexion with their object: thus we often borrow ideas from the touch or taste, and apply them metaphorically to sounds, as —soft, hard, smooth, rough, sweet, harsh, and their similars. In like manner the words—sharp, flat, so universally applied to musical sounds, owe the fitness of their application to their conveying different ideas of motion, the one being expressive of a quick, the other of a dull, or languid impression.

THE last class of imitations is very extensive; it includes all those articulations, which,

which, though they do not amount to a direct designation of the idea, are yet so constructed as to favour, in some degree, the imitation of the action intended, as in—smile, grin, frown, stare: Under this class likewise may be ranked all such approaches to the idea as seem formed to coincide with the changes and inflexions of the voice, to which we are prompted by a spirit of imitation, as in the following contrasts—rise, fall; fret, sooth; cut, melt; and infinite others.

THE imitations of sounds depend for the most part on vowels; they are obvious, simple, and accurate in their similitude. With regard to these, therefore, all primitive languages should resemble

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one another, allowance being made for the differences which might have arisen from organization, from the temperature of the air, or the degrees of sensibility in the first inventors.

THE imitations of motion depend mostly on consonants ; these are far more numerous than the former, less perfect in their similitude, but more powerful by their impressions, because passion and sentiment find their accords in motion. Hence it is, that original languages abound in consonants.

THE representation of a sound is the echo of that sound ; such signs can
no

no otherwise differ throughout the primitive languages than in their degrees of similitude. But the same modifications of motion may be represented by various articulations, or by sounds totally different: because the similitude is determined by the quality of the movement, and not by the nature of the sound. In this case, therefore, the representative, tho' it hath its origin in imitation, must owe its establishment, *in part*, to consent or agreement. Hence it follows, that a diversity in original languages, with regard to signs of this kind, cannot be brought as an argument against a common principle of imitation.

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From signs founded in imitation, and confirmed by consent, the transition was easy and natural to the institution of signs, which, having no relation to their ideas, must have owed their establishment solely and intirely to compact. In short, as we cannot conceive how compact could have taken place, had it not been suggested by some leading idea or experiment, and, as supernatural means are never admitted where there are natural adequate to the purpose, I see no reason why we should hesitate to embrace an hypothesis, which discovers the origin of the representative in the nature of the thing represented ; and, by giving meaning to sound, and expression to motion,

deduces the invention of language, in its first spring, from a simple and almost mechanical exertion of our faculties.

WERE we to select from the monosyllables in our language any two signs expressive of very different ideas, and, by adding new sounds or syllables, to throw them into similar terminations and movements, we should, in great measure, dispossess them of their imitative virtue. It is, therefore, to the same spirit of imitation which prevailed in the formation of the signs themselves, that we owe their being governed in our language through their several declensions and conjugations by the preposition and auxiliary verb ; as, by the use of these,

F 4 each.

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each word still preserves, through every circumstance of case, mood, and tense, the same imitative force which it enjoyed by its original formation. Thus, what hath been imputed to simplicity or want of invention in our ancestors, becomes a proof of justness in their feelings, and of constancy in their natures: and, while we implicitly admire the superior ingenuity in the construction of the Greek and other languages, we do no more, in effect, than profess a preference of sweetness to force, or, of a general dignity of sound to the specific energy of imitation.

As the Greek language hath been
the channel through which the know-
ledge

ledge of antiquity hath descended to us, it was natural that we should adopt the ideas, and proceed on the authority, of the Greek writers. And yet, a very little election might have taught us, that, with regard to the origin of language, they were, of all people, the least fitted to be our instructors. They wrote at a time when their language had been improved to a high degree of refinement; when it retained few or no traces of its primitive character, or of affinity with its rude original, the Phenician. Without examples or materials in their own language, they were too proud to borrow them from any other; destitute of true principles, they took up with the first that presented themselves to their
imagi-

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imagination: thus, attributing to single letters or sounds what could only result from their combinations, they supposed the *α* to be expressive of greatness, the *η* of length: they went farther, and confounding the ideas of figure and sound, they conceived the *O* to be an audible representation of roundness: notions altogether fantastical, I had almost said, puerile; but trifles become venerable from certain characters, and we respect even the slumbers of the divine Plato. ^r

/ If imitation had so great a share in the formation of language, it must have acted with equal force in the government

^r In Cratylus.

of

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of modulation. Music, in its original purity, was used as a mode of conveying or enforcing sentiment ; it was either the substitute or the support of language : might we follow the authority of Lucretius, we should acknowledge her for the elder sister, the tutoress of poetry :

At liquidas avium voces imitarier ore
Ante suit multo, quam lævia carmina cantu
Concelebrare homines possent, aureisque ju-
vare.

WERE this idea to be reduced within the terms of a simple proposition, it would amount to no more than this :— That natural preceded artificial language,

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guage,⁴ or, that sounds must have been imitative before they were made the signs of our ideas by compact.

MEASURE, according to Longinus, belongs to poetry, because it is the province of poetry to employ the passions.⁵ Now the union of measure with passion is founded on the principle of an according movement. Lucretius felt the force of this principle in music; and

*¶ Ergo, si varii sensus animalia cogunt,
Muta tamen cum sint varias emittere voces :
Quanto mortales magis æquum est tum potuisse
Diffimiles alia atque alia res voce notare ? L. V.*

** Μαλλον δε προσεις το Μετρον τη Ποιητικη, παθεισ
ελπισις χρηματω — δι' αι αρμονια και λατκιναζεται.*

In Frag.

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seems to have inferred from it, that in the beginning of time, passion produced song ; and, when language was invented, passion and song gave birth to measure.

We are informed that the Chinese tongue consists of a few undeclined monosyllables, each word having many different significations, determined by the various modulations and accents with which it is accompanied. As the primitive parts of the languages reputed original are all monosyllables, this description of the Chinese may be considered as an image of every infant language : certainly it throws a happy light on the poet's conjecture, confirms the comment

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comment I have made on his idea, and brings an apparent flight of the imagination under the sober view of a philosophical progression.

THAT such an example of primitive simplicity should be found at this time in a language of so high antiquity as the Chinese, would appear very extraordinary, were we not to reflect on the conduct of this people in dividing their language into vulgar and scientific; into a language of sounds and a language of characters; whence it has happened, that, intent solely on the improvement and multiplication of their characters, they have abandoned their oral language to

to its original poverty. Had no such division obtained, their musical signs or accented modulations would, as in other languages, have been gradually converted into fixed and decisive articulations. It is true, that the Ethiopians, Egyptians, and many other nations in imitation of them, divided their language into sacred and vulgar ; but as the sacred consisted of vague and undecisive symbols, ill fitted to convey any useful or certain knowledge, they were under the necessity of attending to the cultivation of the vulgar tongue.

IN our attempts to express our feelings by words significative of those feelings,

we

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we should find ourselves limited to a certain number of ideas; all those being necessarily excluded which have no relation to sound or motion: add to this, that a complex idea cannot be represented by any single image or impression. Where imitation fails, compact must take place. But the improvement of language by the multiplication of arbitrary signs, though necessary to the purposes of speculation, would ill correspond with the vivacity of our sensations, with that imitative spirit which had given being to language, and with the early and constant influence of an expressive modulation: We should therefore strike into collateral resources, and fall upon

upon new sounds and movements, springing from certain arrangements of words, and successions of syllables :⁸ the process is easily comprehended; with an imitative articulation would co-operate imitation by accent; accents determine the times in which successive syllables are pronounced; syllables of unequal quantities must, in the course of their successions, fall into metrical proportions :⁹ and the ear, prompt to cultivate its own pleasure, would seize on every approach to a musical rythmus.

⁸ Καὶ τὰς συλλαβάς δὲ οὐκεῖναι, οἵς αἱ βολαῖς παραγόντοις παθεῖσι, ποικιλῶς φιλότεχνοι.

Dion. Hal. de Struct. Orat.

⁹ Λαξίως δὲ γενομένης, ευτη ἡ φύσις τοιούτου μετρου εὑρε. Arist. Poet. c. iv.

AT this period, and under these circumstances, no man could be distinguished by his genius, without an ear for music, and a talent for versification ; and, the principle of imitation being in both the same, the characters of poet and musician would of course be united in the same person. This union, with the principles which produced it, properly considered, we shall have no difficulty in conceiving, that the first improvements of eloquence should appear in verse,^a

"Ως δ' επει, ο τιγρού λογού οὐκανάσκεινασμένο
μημημα τα ποιηίκη ειτι· αρωίσα γαρ ή ποιηίκη καλα-
σκευη παρηλθει εις το μέσον και ευδοκιμησιν· Ειτα εκεντη
μημημειοι, λυσανίοις το μέτρον, τ' αλλα δι φυλαξανίεις τα
ποιηίκα, συνιγγαψαν· Strabo, l. I.

and

and the earliest efforts of genius be conveyed in song.

BUT, if every original language consisted for the most part of monosyllables; and, if measure, as hath been supposed, was the genuine and immediate result of feeling, it should seem, that there must have been some one simple and primitive mode of versification antecedent to all others, and similar in its mechanism throughout the several languages.

It has been observed of rude and uncivilized nations, as it may of the rude and uncivilized of every nation, that in their common conversation they seem to

G 2 sing.

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sing. Let us imagine ourselves in a state not far removed from the origin of things. Let our voice follow freely the impulse of sentiment, and run uncontrouled into the natural variations of emphasis and accent. We have traced in these variations the origin of measure. But measures, simply as such, have no determined effect; in order to constitute verse, they must be brought to act in certain times and proportions; to this end we employ the pause:^w from the determi-

^w Primum quia sensus omnis habet suum finem possidetque naturale intervallum, quo a sequentis initio dividatur: deinde, quod aures continuam vocem secutæ, ductæque velut prono decurrentis orationis flumine, tum magis judicant cum ille impetus stetit—Hæc est sedes orationis, &c.

Qnint. Inst. I. IX. c. iv.
nation

nation and division of the several movements in succession, springs a musical dependence of one movement on another. Such are the principles of the verse which we have received from our northern ancestors ; such, perhaps, were the Hebrew and Oriental measures ;^x and such, we may presume, was the *oixesov μετρον*, those artless and familiar numbers, to which, in the opinion of their master-critic, the Greeks were directed by a natural impulse.

THE great simplicity of our measures seems to have brought them too much

^x Mensuræ quæ dependent a rebus ipsis.

Lowth. de Sac. Poetr. Heb. p. 32. note 1.

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into contempt with the zealous admitters of the Greek and Latin. It is said, that we have no syllables of determined quantities. How then can we have a regular and supported rhythmus? all measures spring from the differences in the quantities of successive syllables; the quantity of a syllable is the time employed, or the force bestowed, by the voice on its pronunciation. Now, whether these quantities are governed by an invariable prosody, or flow from the impression of the sense and accent, the effects will be much the same in all parallel movements:

Θελω λεγειν Ατρεδας,

Θελω δε Καδμον αδειν.

I said

I fain would praise the Atrides,
I fain would sing of Cadmus.

THE simplest measures are those in which each foot, or metrical division, consists but of two syllables. If the accent rises on the first syllable, and subsides in the second, the weaker vibration will produce a sound of shorter duration, and there will be a transition in the sounds from acute to grave:

¶ Syllaba acuta longius intervallum penetrat, et plures sui similes syllabas propagat in aëre; ideoque et diutius vivit ejus imago audibilis, et a distantibus melius percipitur et majori intervallo repetitur ab echo, quam syllaba gravis, aut syllabico accentu remisso prolatæ: non secus ac sit in chorda intensius ducta, quam in ea quæ remissius: et hinc nimirum est, ut syllaba acuta videatur semper longior quam

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Sing, my | harp, of | God on | high.

If the accent² is thrown on the second syllable, and the voice touches lightly on the first, the duration of the sounds will be as the force of the vibrations, and the passage from grave to acute:

And on the wings³ of mighty winds³.

gravis, spectata scilicet mora; non quia dum est in ore proferentis ipsi insistitur, sed quia ejus species in aëre vivit. Kirch. Musur. l. VIII. c. vii.

² Let it be remembered, that, throughout this discourse, the word *accent* is made to denote an acute, or grave, sound; or, which is the same thing, an enforcement, or relaxation of the voice, on a single syllable.

By

By this it appears, that men fell upon the use of measures on the very same principle by which they struck into a musical succession of notes. The learned Kircher hath even gone so far, as to suppose music to have been the off-spring of accentuation—*Vides igitur quo modo ex natura accentus paulatim musica excreverit*—And, in fact, what is music in its simplest form, in recitative for instance, but a happy accommodation of the powers of accent and movement to the tones and proportions of our feelings? We have seen that the quantities of syllables are but the variations of accent; and that primitive measures were nothing more than transitions from acute

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acute sounds to grave, or from grave to acute. How is this? have the Greek and Teutonic poesy one common origin? do the cedar and the bramble spring from the same root? The language of the imagination is imposing; let us attend to that of common sense—*Poema nemo dubitaverit ab imperito quodam initio fusum, et aurium mensurâ, et similiter recurrentium spatiorum observatione esse generatum; mox in eo repertos pedes.*² —What the critic understood by the *aurium mensurâ, &c.* may be collected from a ludicrous passage in the *Plutus* of Aristophanes, where the sycophant, or informer, in the act of rejecting the

² *Quint. de Inst. Orat. I. IX. c. iv.*

ftench

stench of a sacrifice, completes a verse of six iambics by the mere play of accents, without the aid of prosody or articulation :

Within, in all their filth,
Are heaps of broil'd fish, and of greasy roast
meat.

Hu hu', hu hu', hu hu', hu hu', hu hu', hu hu'.

As the most ingenious compounds, in language, are but artificial combinations of simple ideas, increasing with the improvements of the understanding ; in like manner, the most artificial measures,

τὸν Εὐδόν τετταράκοντα μισθωταῖς
Πολὺ χρηματικῶν, καὶ κρέων απομενῶν.
υῦ, υῦ, υῦ, υῦ, υῦ, υῦ. Act. IV. Sc. iii.
—Numeros memini, si verba tenerem.

in

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in poesy, are nothing more than ingenious variations of the simple proportions of sounds, keeping pace with the refinements of taste and feeling: for the dactyle does but repeat the second stroke of the trochée, the anapæst the first of the iambic. Ut proinde rhythmus latè sumptus nihil aliud sit, quam sonus quidam proportionatus, ex tardis et velocibus motibus, sive, quod idem est, ex variis acuminis et gravitatis gradibus compositus ^{c.}.

THIS principle is not confined to regular and established measures; it governs the succession of our monosyllables even in common discourse, but much more

^c Kirch. Musur. I. VIII. c. iii.

when

when the occasion calls for a spirited and impassioned articulation. As to our words of two, three, or four syllables, we have borrowed them for the most part from other languages ; but, in ours, they disown their vernacular accents ; and, complying with the genius of our national pronunciation, fall with great regularity into iambic and trochaic movements. Upon the whole, the laws of musical and therefore of metrical proportions, however varied they may be in their modes, are universal in their influence ; they obtain in all languages, and extend through every branch of elocution. Hence it is, that prose hath its rhythmus, as well as verse ; that expression so much depends on the music of the voice ; and that the finest strains of eloquence fall short of their

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their effects, when delivered in equal tones, or with a lifeless and unaccented pronunciation.

No language can be incapable of metre, unless the nature of its construction should be such, as that all its syllables must necessarily be pronounced in equal times. It was reserved for the spirit of modern criticism to conceive the existence of such a language: and to render the example still more remarkable, it hath been fixed upon the Jews; a people, who, to a natural heat of temper, united the most ardent enthusiasm, and were distinguished from every other nation on the earth, by the quickness of their feelings, and the vehemence of

their passions. Let those who can insist on such a paradox reconcile it to history and to nature.

GARCILASSO de la Vega informs us⁴, that the poets of Peru used not rhimes, but a kind of loose verse consisting of long and short syllables; his meaning will be best understood by the specimens which he has given us of those measures. The first is a sonnet addressed to the Peruvian Isis, or Juno. The Latin translation of this piece is recommended by La Vega as a faithful copy of the original:

⁴ Comment. of Peru.

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Pulchra Nympha,	Fairest Goddess,
Frater tuus	Now thy brother
Urnam tuam *	Breaks thy urn, and
Nunc infringit;	Sends the tempest :
Cujus ictus †	At each blow, a
Tonat, fulget,	Sound tremendous
Fulminatque	Bursts from heav'n, and
Sed tu, Nympha,	Unremitting
Tuam lympham	Lightning flashes,
Fundens, pluis,	Thunder rattles.
Interdumque	But thou, nymph, thy
Grandinem seu	Clouds collecting,

* The bucket, or water-measure of the Egyptian Isis.

† Cavum conversa cuspide montem
Impulit in latus, ac venti, velut agmine facto,
Qua data porta ruunt
Intonuere poli, et crebris micat ignibus æther.

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Nivem mittis ^a .	Pour'd their waters;
Mundi factor	And commixing
Virachoca	Hail and snow, in
Ad hoc munus	Storm descendest.
Te sufficit	Of the world the
Et præfecit. ^b	Great Creator
	To this function
	Thee appointed,
	Partner of his
	Pow'r, and glory.

THE second specimen is part of a love-song, and runs thus in English:

^a Thus Juno:
His ego nigrantem commistum grandine nimbum
Desuper infundam.

^b Tibi divum pater
Et mulcere dedit fluctus, et tollere. Aen. I. I.

H

To

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To the fair one
Go, my song ;
Say, at midnight
I shall come.

It is to be observed in both these examples, that the first repose of the voice is on the fourth syllable; that, while the pause distinguishes, the sense connects the movements, producing an effect equivalent to a verse of eight, or of seven syllables. In this joint operation we discover the origin of our rhythmus, and have as it were in prospect all the consequent variations and improvements of our measures.

THE

THE Hebrew or Oriental measures, for there could be no material difference in the verse of sister-dialects, are thus described by a modern critic—ⁱ *Genus liberum—versus habens cum brevitate sonoros, musicis poeticisque pedibus constantes, qui tibiæ saltationibusque facile accommodentur, ut cantando, atque à saltantibus recitati perfectum carmen videri potuerint.* — This description expresses the genius of all primitive poetry; it is a portrait which finds its original under every meridian: the features are Oriental, American, Saxon; they unite under one common character the most distant

ⁱ Michaelis on Lowth, page 5.

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regions, and afford the fairest proof of the universality of those laws by which measures have sprung out of a natural prosody.

We have seen, that the first enlargement of our verse grew out of the reciprocal dependence of successive movements. But as a continual succession of equivalent impressions must fatigue the ear, a relief was sought to the monotony by diverting the movements from an immediate into an alternate dependence :

To drive the deer with hound and horn
Earl Piercy took his way ;
The child may rue that is unborn
The hunting of that day.⁴

* Chevy Chase.

THE

THE responses of the stanza set the genius of our rhythmus in the clearest light ; and it is probable that rhimes were first employed as the marks of these responses. But an unvaried and uniform alternation was ill fitted to correct a monotonous harmony : it became expedient therefore to extend the scale of the rhythmus, to give it a more liberal flow, and, by introducing with greater freedom into the movements measures of unequal and even opposite effects, to throw them into new modes and degrees of dependence. Let us examine whether our pentameter be formed for the attainment of these ends, and how far it may be intitled to the flattering distinction of heroic verse.

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THE genuine measures of this verse are the trochee, the iambic, and the spondee;¹ but it runs with the greatest promptness and constancy into the iambic. From this very difference it is, that we derive the principal means of varying our measures; as in the passage from the trochee to the iambic, a movement, the most spirited and elastic:

¹ Some are of opinion, that the dactyle may take place in the pentameter. This verse consists of five feet, or ten syllables; if, therefore, we appropriate three syllables to any one foot, then there must be in that verse a foot of one syllable: for instance,

And vindicate the ways of God to man.

If the word vindicate be considered as a dactyle, then the monosyllable *and* must be a compleat mea-

Arms

A⁷rms and the man I sing ^m

Stood like a tow'r.

WHEN an enforced or ascending accent strikes on a monosyllable, the vibrations continue, as in the chord of a musical instrument, after the impression or articulation hath ceased; especially when the stroke is succeeded by a pause, as in the last example. It has been before observed, that the structure of a monosyllable may be such as to render it equivalent to a succession of impres-

sure, which is absurd, and contrary to the nature of measure.

^m Dryden's Transl. of the AEn.

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sions. Where accent and structure co-operate, they may give a degree of duration to a single syllable, which it would be difficult to equal by a succession of syllables :

And, fled from monarchs, St. John, *dwells*
with thee.^a

BUT the point the most in favor of our versification is this, that, as accents are modes of expression, every advantage which they bestow on the signs of our ideas extends with greater force to the ideas themselves, and the sense receives a higher improvement than the sound. It should seem, that the mecha-

^a Pope's *Essay on Man.*

nism of the Greek verse took its rise, and derived its advantages, from the opposite principle; a point of difference which is recommended to the consideration of those, who, governed rather by authority than feeling, exclaim against the barbarism of a monosyllabical rhythmus; and seem to estimate words more by the space which they fill, than by the effects which they produce.

It is said, that monosyllables are fit to describe a slow and heavy motion; and may be happily employed to express languor and melancholy. What inference are we to draw from hence, should it appear, that monosyllables may be

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full as happily employed on the opposite motions and affections ?

No ; fly me, fly me, far as pole from pole.

Ah ! come not, write not, think not once of me.

Pant on thy lip, and to thy heart be press'd ;
Give all thou canst, and let me dream the rest.

In our verse, it is the sense that gives vigor to the movement. Monosyllables bring our ideas into a closer order, and more immediate comparison ; consequently their relations become more striking. The feeblest and heaviest lines in our language are those which are overcharged with polysyllables.

THE

POETRY AND MUSIC. 107

THE strong propensity in the pentameter to the iambic measure^o is the cause that a counter-measure, as in the passage from the iambic to the trochee, produceth a kind of check or suspension of the movement :

Not to know me, argues thyself unknown.^P

Hail, Son of God, Saviour of men.^P

^o This verse is never more musical than when it consists intirely of iambics: on the contrary, two trochees in succession, have an ill effect, as:

Gen'rous converse, a soul exempt from pride.
Essay on Crit.

^P *Paradise Lost.*

THERE

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THERE is a singular dignity in this transition, when it springs, as in these examples, from an elevation in the sentiment; our minor poets employ it simply as a variation of the cadence.

BUT the relaxation of the trochee may be so brought into a contrast with the spring of the iambic as to produce effects directly opposed to those which we have just experienced:

'The downy feather on the cordage hung
Moves not.'

* Acres, quæ ex brevibus ad longas insurgunt:
leniores, quæ à longis in breves descendunt.

Quint. l. IX. c. iv.

* The Fleece.

WHERE

WHERE no pause intervenes, and the succession is immediate, the effect may be equivalent to *that* of a spondee :

With easy course
The vessels glide, unless their speed be
stopp'd
By *dead calms* that oft' lie on those smooth
seas *.

THE last foot in this verse is a perfect spondee ; for, where the accents fall with equal force on each syllable of a foot, their quantities will be equal. As again, in the line which immediately follows :

* *The Fleece.*

While

110 OBSERVATIONS ON

While every Zephyr sleeps, then the
Shrōuds drōp.

THE laws of art, it is true, prescribe that our pentameter should terminate in an iambic: but there are beauties of a rank to supersede laws, and the genius of our verse hath a dispensing power.

THE opposition in the prompt and elastic motion of the iambic to the slow and dwelling step of the spondee is one of the happiest resources in our simple versification :

So much I feel my genial spirits droop,
My hopes all flat : ———

Samson Agonistes.

Let

POETRY AND MUSIC. 111

Let us hear the most artless and untutored of the British Muses.

Great grief, O Lord, doth me assail,
Some pity on me take,
My eyes wax dim^o —

Thus nature and sentiment give existence
to measures which art and reflection
adopt for their own^x.

I HAVE supposed that the rhythmus
of our verse depends on the relative ef-
fects of successive movements: thus,

^o Sternhold's Version of the Psalms.

^x *Ante enim carmen ortum est quam observatio
carminis.* Quint. Inst. Orat.

I 12 OBSERVATIONS ON

should movements of equal force be divided by the pause into equal time, the balance will be exact, and the rhythmus perfect:

Or seek to ruin—whom I seemed to raise^y.

ON the contrary, should the structure of the verse be such, as that the ear cannot with facility make a division of the movements, nor reduce into any proportion their successive effects, then the rhythmus will be dissolved, and the movements become prosaic.

And with a pale and yellow melancholy^z.

^y Ben. Johnson, Verses addressed to Shakespear.

^z Twelfth Night.

The constant and even tenor of the couplet secures it from falling into such relaxations ; a security, however, in which the poet hath little reason to triumph, while the perpetual returns of similar impressions lie like weights upon our spirits, and oppress the imagination *. Strong passions, the warm effusions of the soul, were never destined to creep through monotonous parallels ; they call for a more liberal rhythmus ; for movements, not balanced by rule, but measured by sentiment, and flowing in ever new yet musical proportions :

* Similitudine tedium ac satietatem creat : quodque est dulcius, magis perit : amittitque et fidem, et affectus, motusque omnes. Quint. Inst. Orat. L. ix. c. iv.

I

O thou,

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O thou, that with surpassing glory crown'd
Look'st from thy sole dominion like the God
Of this new world, at whose sight all the
stars

Hide their diminish'd heads, to thee I call;
But with no friendly voice, and add thy
name,

O sun, to tell thee how I hate thy beams^b.

THE vast accession to our language of foreign compounds and polysyllables hath opened new springs, and multiplied the means of varying our modulations. But under whatever form these variations appear, or however artfully they may be wrought, in imitation of a classical rhythmus, yet they still act in sub-

^b Paradise Lost.

jection

jection to that simple and original principle, by which the accent governs the measure, while the sense, in conjunction with the laws of musical succession, governs the accent. It will likewise be found, that the sense in most cases determines the pause. And thus we prove, by an uniform and unaltered practice, what had been before inferred from the reason of the thing, that the origin of verse was from the impression of sentiment.

WHATEVER disputes may have arisen among the learned concerning the parent or primitive tongue, they perfectly agree as to its genius and character, and admit with one consent, that it must have been barren of words, rude of sound, of the

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simplest construction, and abounding with monosyllables. The Greek language, therefore, whether derived or original, had its æra of rudeness and simplicity ; and, if so, the simplest measures must have been the first in order^c. The highest praise of human wit is, to have improved or refined on the hints given by nature ; to act without such hints, would be to create.]

It may be asked in this place, what advantages did the Greeks derive from

^c *Certum quippe est linguas omnes, quæ monosyllabis constant, esse cæteris antiquiores. Multis abundavit monosyllabis antiqua Græca, cuius vestigia apud poetas, qui antiquitatem affectarunt, remansere non pauca.* Salmasius, de re Hellenistica.

their improvements on the simplicity of their primitive measures? and, how far may the knowledge of these advantages be of use to us, or promote the refinement of our language and measures.

IT cannot be imagined that the Greeks could create any new mode of imitation: their great object seems to have been, by a gradual reformation of their language, to vary their measures, and multiply the resources of sound and motion; not so much in the view of improving the means of imitation, as of preserving to the ear the continual enjoyment of a regular dignity and sweetness of versification. It was in consequence of this general intention, that they bestowed the

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utmost dignity of sound and motion on the most familiar ideas, though they hereby deprived the more important of their just distinction and pre-eminence.

THE music of the hexameter is noble, vigorous, sublime; but in this, as in our modern counterpoint, the specific impressions are sunk in the general effect^d. All refinements have a tendency to efface

^d Il contrappunto, essendo composito di varie parti, l'una acuta, l'altra grave, questa di andamento presto, quella di tardo, che hanno tutte a trovarsi in sieme, e ferir l'orecchie ad un tempo, comme potrebbe egli muovere nell' animo nostro una tal determinata passioné, la quale di sua natura rechiede un determinato moto, e un determinato tuono. Algarotti, Saggio sopra l'Opera in Musica, p. 285.

the principles of the art into which they are introduced. Were the counterpoint to take entire possession of our music, we should lose every idea of its original destination, and the sole object of the art would be to flatter the ear.

To the second part of the question proposed, I answer, that, to make our language capable of a perfect polish, and classical rhythmus, we must cast it over again, purge and transmute it into a more ductile character. The first step towards such a reformation would be the most difficult; for we must disclaim the supports which we have borrowed from other tongues, and form our own compounds out of our primitive roots.

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In the management of this process, we must, after the example of the Greeks, reduce by every art our redundant consonants; soften and draw out by a happy mixture of vowels the rude but expressive monosyllable. We must reject the preposition and auxiliary verb, and supply their functions by adjunct sounds and varied terminations. In this pursuit, the habitual preference of sound to sense would extend from the signs of our ideas to their order, and transposition would necessarily become a part of the reformation. I say necessarily, because a construction perfectly simple would be inconsistent with the genius of a language abounding, like the Greek, with polysyllables. Ω Αθηναῖοι αὐδεῖς, εὐχοματεῖς πατέρες καὶ πατέρας Θεοῖς. How improved

proved by inversion? Ω αὐδεῖς Αθηναῖοι,
τοῖς Θεοῖς εὐχομέναι πάσι καὶ πασχίσ. We
shall be still more sensible of the advan-
tage in the change from Θεα αειδε οὐλομενην
μηνιν, το Μηνιν αειδε Θεα Ουλομενην. Thus
the refinements of language, by multi-
plying its sounds, made it necessary to
throw the ideas out of their natural or-
der; and transposition, by varying the
relations and proportions of those sounds;
gave birth to artificial measures, and a
fixed prosody.

IN a language consisting mostly of mo-
nosyllables, transposition is seldom used,
or, when used, differs little from an ab-
solute simplicity. For instance, we hard-
ly attend to the difference between

My

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My faith and truth, O Samson, prove.

And

O Samson, prove my faith and truth.

In prose we are less tempted to violate the simplicity of our construction, because we are not under an equal necessity of supporting the movements.^f It is

^e The movements of prose hold a middle course, between a total neglect, and an absolute strictness of measure :

Numerisque fertur
Lege solitus.

Id quod Cicero optime videt, ac testatur frequenter, se quod numerosum ut quærere : ut magis non
true,

true, that we have borrowed a great number of polysyllables from other languages; but we temper the precipitation or redundancy of these sounds by the frequent interposition of our native monosyllables. It was on this principle, it should seem, that the Greeks continued to employ those monosyllabic particles which had been originally the signs of cases, though they had rendered them of no effect with regard to the sense, from the moment that their functions had been supplied by termination.

αριθμον, quod esset inscitum et agreste, quam ευριθμον,
quod poeticum est, esse compositionem velit.

Quint. Inst. l. IX. c. iv.

VARIOUS

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VARIOUS have been the conjectures of learned and ingenious men touching the causes of the separation of Music from Poetry. The greatest difficulty with me is, to comprehend how their union could have subsisted after the institution of measures founded on artificial quantities. We must take this subject a little higher.

MUSICAL pronunciation must depend on the laws of musical succession: accordingly, in the pronunciation of words of two syllables, music constantly throws its accent on the first: as in *glory*, *ruin*; or

or on the second, as rejoice, exult.^e In words of three syllables, music takes no notice of quantities otherwise than by lengthening or shortening the duration of the middle syllable: as in émphasis, harmony, emphátic, harmónic. Words of four syllables are, in the language of music, nothing more than duplications of words of two; that is to say, they regularly fall, either into two iambics, as cilitáte, omnípoténce; or into two trochees, as únrelénting, únfrequénted. By

^f A word, therefore, of two syllables hath no advantage, in point of movement, over two monosyllables thrown into the same measure. But eight verses out of ten, throughout our best poems, have no other advantage than what they derive from the use of disyllables. What do we mean when we exclaim against a monosyllabical rhythmus?

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this is appears, that the same principle, which throws our native monosyllables into measure, forms and directs the general pronunciation of our mixed language; with this difference, that, as the sense could have no part in determining the accents of polysyllables, the relative quantities of these syllables must have been decided intirely by the ear, and have fallen singly under the laws of musical accentuation: to which must be added, that these quantities are, by a regular and uniform pronunciation, become invariable; and so far partake of the advantage, while at the same time they point out the origin, of a fixed prosody.

THE constancy with which we have adhered to these laws, hath preserved the

the native character of our verse through every stage of its improvement. By repeating the first stroke of the iambic, and the second of the trochee, the ancients formed their anapæst and daëstyle. By reducing their polysyllables under the government of our musical accents, we have dispossessed them in some degree of their artificial advantages, and subdued them to the tenor of a monosyllabical rhythmus. The rhythmus of every language depends principally on the signs of simple ideas, as by these we more immediately express our feelings; these signs, in our language, are for the most part monosyllables. I need not repeat what hath been already observed concerning the construction of our language. How absurdly

absurdly have our ancestors been charged with a dull neglect of classical advantages, and a perverse predilection for their own rude measures and barbarous articulation !

IF from musical quantities we pass to the consideration of an artificial prosody, it will be difficult to conceive, that this change could have been made with a view, as some have imagined, to a more intimate and perfect union of Music with Poetry : since, should music observe the quantities by institution, she must abandon her own ; should she neglect those quantities, the musical rhythmus would be at variance with the poetic.

THE

THE artifice of contracted measures, and the variety resulting from these contrasts, are most unfavorable to music, because they disturb her in the government of her accents, and thwart her in the exertion of her natural powers. It is for this reason, that, from our simple measures, music ever selects the most simple. But the ancient lyric poesy abounds with the most varied measures, and embraces every mode of versification: true; it abounds likewise with the most picturesque images, and the boldest metaphors: are we therefore to conclude that these are the true objects of musical imitation? How long are we to be amused

K with

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with inferences drawn from an union which we do not comprehend, and from a practice of which we have not one decisive example?

Vossius⁸ asserts with great confidence, that the music of the ancients derived its excellence from the force of their poetic rhythmus: this force he makes to consist in the power of conveying just and lively images of the things represented. It seems intirely to have escaped him, that these images are confined to objects of sound or motion; and that, in the imitation of such, music must, from its na-

* De Poematum Cantu et viribus Rhythmi.

ture,

ture, be superior to verse; so that the more powerful imitation must have borrowed its advantages from the more imperfect. From this notable proposition he concludes, that modern language and poesy are totally unqualified to unite with music. And yet, where measure flows from the laws of musical pronunciation, Poetry and Music have one common rhythmus: and, if sentiment takes a part in determining the measure, their union becomes still more happy and intimate: for music hath no expression but in virtue of her accents; nor have her accents any imitative force but what they derive from sentiment. The truth is, music borrows sentiments from poetry, and lends her movements, and conse-

K 2 quently

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quently must prefer that mode of versification which leaves her most at liberty to consult her own genius.

AFTER what hath been already observed of the nature and origin of these sister-arts, it cannot be thought necessary, in this place, to prove, that a dramatic spirit must be the common principle of their union. This spirit is not confined to the regular drama; it inspires the lover's address, the conqueror's triumph, the captive's lamentation; in short, it may govern every mode of composition in which the poet assumes a character, and speaks and acts in consequence of that character.

To sentiments which spring from character and passion, the lyric poet should unite images productive of sentiment and passion. Objects in repose, or the beauties of still-life, fall not within the province of musical imitation; nor can music take a part in the colouring of language. Our modern lyric poesy is a school for painters, not for musicians. The form of invocation, the distinctions of the strophe, the antistrophe, and chorus, are mere pretensions. To what purpose do we solicit the genius of music, while we abandon, without reserve, the plectrum for the pencil, and cast aside the lyre, as a child doth its rattle,

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in the moment that we proclaim it to be
the object of our preference?

BUT it is said, that music, by its im-
pressions on one sense, may excite affec-
tions similar to those which take their
rise from another: and it has been in-
ferred from hence, that the musician
can, by a kind of enchantment, *paint*
visible objects. To paint by movements
would be enchantment indeed; but the
wonder ceases when we are made to un-
derstand, that music hath no other means
of representing a visible object, than by
producing in the soul the same move-

ments which we should naturally feel were that object present.^b

THESE observations lead us to the necessary distinction of the image from its effect; of its beauty as a visible object, from its energy as a source of pathetic emotions. Thus we draw the line between painting and music: nor does the occasion call for a master-stroke; their separation will be marked in the choice of their objects:

Long, pity, let the nations view
Thy sky-worn robes of tenderest blue,
And eyes of dewy light!ⁱ

^b Dict. de Musique, Art. Imitation.

ⁱ Collins, Ode to Pity.

Deserted at his utmost need
By those his former bounty fed,
On the bare earth expos'd he lies
With not a friend to close his eyes. ^k

If, instead of expressing our own, we describe the feelings of others, and so enter into their condition as to excite a lively sense of their several affections, we retain the spirit of the drama, tho' we abandon the form. The most perfect poem of this kind, in our language, is the Feast of Alexander, by Mr. Dryden. Here, music unites with poetry in the character of a descriptive art;

^k Dryden, Alexander's Feast.

but

but then the objects of her descriptions are her own impressions.

It was objected by Aristotle to the poets of his time, that they were the principal speakers in their own poems; contrary to the practice of Homer, who well knew, that, while the poet speaks, the imitation or the drama ceases.¹ It is remarkable that this is the very æra from which Plutarch dates the corruption of music. When the poet ceased to write from the movements of the heart, the musician began to sing from the caprice of the imagination.

¹ De Poet. c. xxiv.

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IN proportion as the spirit of expression declines, a taste for description will, of course, prevail; we *express* the agitations and affections of our minds; we *describe* the circumstances and qualities of external objects: the application of measure to either purpose depends on the nature of the subject, or the genius of the writer. A single instance may suffice to set this idea in the clearest light:

When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight
to throw,

The line too labours, and the words move
slow. ^m

^m Pope, Essay on Criticism.

So

So will they in the expression of a
deep and heavy affliction:

And in this harsh world draw thy breath in
pain.^a

LIKE parallels may be continued thro'
all the examples which have been given
of pathetic accords. Now, though the
imitations of verse may be applied to the
purposes either of expression or of de-
scription, it is not the same thing with
regard to music, the effects of which are
so exquisite, so fitted by nature to move
the passions, that we feel ourselves hurt

^a Hamlet.

and

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and disappointed, when forced to reconcile our sensations to a simple and unaffectionate coincidence of sound or motion.

AGAIN, in descriptive poetry, the imitations often turn on the force of particular words, on the resemblance between the sign and the idea:

Jarring sound

*Th' infernal doors, and on their hinges
grate*

Harsh thunder.•

In this, and in every other instance where the resemblance is determined by

• *Paradise Lost.*

sound,

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sound, the characters of Poetry and Music are directly opposed ; for, the nature of articulation strictly considered, it will appear, that in poetry, the imitations of harsh and rude sounds must be the most perfect ; in music, it is just the reverse. It was for this reason, that our incomparable Milton, in his imitations of musical ideas, threw the force of the imitation, not on the sound, but on the movement :

Save where silence yields
To the night-warbling bird, that now
awake
Tunes sweetest his *love-labor'd* song.?

? *Paradise Lost.*

Tasso

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TASSO was not so judicious, or trusted too much to the sweetness of his language :

Odi quello usignuolo,
Che vá di ramo in ramo
Cantando, Io amo, Io amo.⁴

Hear that sweet nightingale,
Who flies from grove to grove
His song—I love, I love.

THESE imitations of musical ideas by articulate sounds have much the same effect with the imitations of the force of particular words by musical sounds.

⁴ Aminta.

Thus,

Thus, Handel seldom fails to ascend with the word *rise*, and descend with the word *fall*. Purcell goes still farther, and accompanies every idea of *roundness* with an endless *rotation* of notes. But what shall we say to that musician, who disgraces the poet by realizing his metaphors, and, in downright earnest, makes the fields *laugh*, and the vallies *sing*. In music, it is better to have no ideas at all than to have false ones, and it will be safer to trust to the simple effects of impression than to the idle conceits of a forced imitation.

IN our attempts to reduce music into an union with descriptive poetry, we should do

well to consider, that music can no otherwise imitate any particular sound, than by becoming the thing it imitates: it hath an equal facility in conforming with simple ideas of motion. What effects can be expected from imitations, in which there is neither ingenuity in the execution nor importance in the object?

VERSE on the other hand, considered as motion, falls far short of the promptness and facility of music; nor can it, with respect to sounds, rise above a distant and vague assimilation: its imitations, therefore, in either case, may be attended with some degree of surprise and pleasure. The misfortune is, that our poets dwell too much on this trifling

advan-

advantage, and pursue it, to an almost total neglect of the nobler purposes of imitation.

I AM not so vain as to expect that my ideas on this subject should have much weight with the professors of either art, or influence them to a change of those principles and pursuits in which they are supported by an established practice. But this I will venture to affirm, that there cannot be a more certain proof of a corrupt taste, than to find the powers of imitation diverted from the more important to inferior purposes. I shall submit my sentiments on this point, as I have done on every other, to a fair examination. There is a passage in Virgil

L where

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where he describes the heavy fall of an ox—Procumbit humi bos—I am not at all struck with this imitation, and the reason must be, that there is nothing either pleasing or interesting in the object. But, let the idea be of a nature to engage our attention, and we are no longer indifferent to its accord :

Scarce from his mould
Behemoth, biggest-born of earth, upheav'd
His vastness.^r

THE effect still rises upon us with the interest which we take in the object :

* *Paradise Lost.*

Sic fatus senior, telumque imbelle sine ictu
Conjecit.*

WHY is the feebleness in this movement so very affecting? Is it not, that it corresponds with our pity of the poor old king, and completes the image of his forlorn condition:

Exhausted, spiritless, afflicted, fall'n.^t

WHENCE is it then, that, in poetry, the most celebrated examples of imita-

* Æneid.

^t Samson Agonistes.

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tion are such as are merely descriptive?

In imitating the motions of external objects through their various modifications, as, of lightness, heaviness, rapidity,^u slowness, force, weakness, and

" A modern critic is of opinion, that the Alexandrine is best calculated to exemplify swiftness, because it most naturally exhibits the act of passing through a long space in a short time. Is it meant, that we pass through the long space of the Alexandrine in as short a time as we should through the shorter space of the pentameter? But this cannot be; for, supposing an equal fluency in the syllables employed in each, their times must be always in the proportion of 12 to 10. That line so often cited as an example of swiftness, sets this matter in the clearest light :

the

the like, the merit of the imitation is decided by a direct comparison with a known and determined object. It would be the same thing with regard to our passions, considered as motions of the soul, were these motions of a nature to be reduced into sensible and determined images. In this case, therefore, we do not judge of the imitation, as in the former, by a direct comparison, but by an instantaneous feeling; with this addi-

Αὐτὶς ἵπειτα πεδούσε κυλισθέτο λακας αναιδης.

From whence springs the swiftness in this instance? Is it not from hence, that we pass through a verse of 17 syllables in the same time that we should pass through a verse of 13? But our Alexandrine can never consist of more or less than 12 syllables. The inference is obvious.

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tional difference, that we are least sensible of the imitation, when most transported by its effects ; for, if the poet is successful in touching the springs of passion, our spirits obey the impression, and run into the same movements with those which accompany the sentiment ; thus, while we are under the united influence of the natural motion of the passion, and the artificial movement of the verse, we lose sight of the imitation in the simplicity of the union, and energy of the effect. But in matters of mere description it is not so ; in these imitation is professed, and there cannot be a beauty without a manifestation of art. In short, wherever passion is concerned, a coincidence of sound and mo-

tion becomes, as it were, the native and proper language of that passion; and our inattention to the art which may be employed on these occasions is so far from contradicting, that it confirms all that has been offered on the origin of verse, and on the natural correspondence between movement and passion.

APPENDIX.

If the passions, according to the classes assigned them, have their proper and characteristic movements, must not their impressions extend to the imagination? and if so, may we not collect from hence, how far, and under what restrictions, imagery may be the language of passion?

LET us suppose that the imagination may be heated by the movements of quickened and inflamed spirits: hence it
may

may co-operate with the passions of anger, revenge, and their collaterals. In every such case the image must correspond with the motive; consequently, it should be bold, concise, and decisive, that the fancy may not seem to dwell on her own operations.

THE imagination may be raised by movements of expansion; hence its agreement with pride, wonder, and exultation. But as these passions and their movements tend naturally towards increase, it follows, that the images here employed may be enlarged and dilated. In this case, therefore, contrary to the former, a display of imagination coincides with the nature of the affection.

IF the imagination may be heated or raised into an agreement with the motions of the animal spirits, must it not languish and subside with them; how then can imagery be the language of grief or dejection? the vibrations of relaxed nerves can communicate nothing more than their own languor: accordingly, we shall always find, that, while we are under the influence of a dispiriting passion, our aim will be to express, not to describe, our feelings.

SUCH, I conceive, must be the laws of nature with regard to the influence of passion on the fancy: and yet, I mean
not

not to recommend a strict observance of them. It were a vain and ill-judged attempt to reduce the flights of the imagination under the government of a too rigid philosophy. In this, as in some other subjects, nature seems to sport with our understanding, and lays aside her laws, to wanton in her creations.

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